



Department  
for Education

# Area Reviews: A Statement of Customer Service to Institutions

## Objectives of the programme

The aim of each review is to ensure that an area has the right capacity to meet the needs of students and employers in each area, provided by institutions which are financially stable and able to deliver high quality provision. The programme has been designed to ensure that all sixth form and general further education colleges have an opportunity to put themselves on a strong footing for the long term.

This statement of customer service sets out the standard to which each review will be delivered and what participants can expect.

## Status and scope

For the purposes of this statement, “customers” mean representatives of all institutions who are engaged in the area review process.

This statement has been agreed by the National Area Review Steering Group.

## Delivery

Each review is administered at a consistent standard using quality assured processes that are agreed by the National Area Review Steering Group and that enable all steering group members to engage fully in the review process. Participants should expect:

- the timetable and milestones of the review to follow a standard pattern which is clarified at the start of each review; a clear delivery plan which delivers specific outcomes which will be communicated in advance of the first steering group; confirmation of timescale and requirements of participants; steering group members may agree flexibility to reflect the size and scale of the review area
- confirmation of the chair of the steering group and deputy commissioner in advance of the review
- a dedicated delivery team for each review, who are part of the Joint Area Review Delivery Unit, delivering to a consistent standard
- quality assured processes including financial assessment of options and estates’ reports to be delivered to a consistent standard
- confirmation of contact details of the delivery lead at the outset of a review
- to experience professional engagement with further education and sixth-form college advisers
- clarity about steering group members’ roles, including the opportunity to influence the review arrangements and outcomes, in line with guidance published in March 2016

- to engage fully in the process and all those involved in the review process should expect to receive and deliver consistent messages
- to receive papers for each steering group a week in advance and that draft notes of the meeting will be circulated within one week
- be notified of the timescale for publication of notes of meetings and the final report and the opportunity to check for factual accuracy and review sensitivity of information.

## Engagement with colleges

Colleges in scope of a review play a central role in the review process and should expect:

- confirmation of information required from colleges in advance of the review
- a further education or sixth-form college adviser team to visit each college to gather contextual, financial and quality information, and discuss options being considered by the college. Each adviser works to a written code of conduct that stipulates the standard for their engagement and requires each adviser to act with integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality
- the report of the advisers' visits to be submitted to the institution so that it can be confirmed for accuracy
- input required by colleges during the process to be confirmed by the deputy commissioner and delivery team
- college governing bodies to endorse recommendations and give an in-principle commitment to implement after the review has concluded.

## Communication

Queries should be sent to the named delivery lead or [area.reviews@education.gov.uk](mailto:area.reviews@education.gov.uk) and a response will be made within 3 days. We request that all enquirers check information provided and are clear about what help is required when submitting a query.

It is essential that communication is accurate, timely and reliable within an effective review.

Institutions can expect:

- each college principal and governing body to retain responsibility for pro-active communication with staff, students and relevant unions about progress of the review and potential implications for the institution. The Education and Training Foundation have produced a good practice guide on engaging staff during area reviews
- input from a wider group of stakeholders about post-16 provision in the local area, local needs and how those can be met to inform the review recommendations
- no formal communication to non-steering group members during the period of the review about progress or options being considered
- data provided for the review to be used as set out in the data sharing protocol.

## Managing information

Diverse and reliable information, collated to a standard specification, informs the local context, priorities and options considered by the steering group. We will:

- provide timely and accurate information about in-scope provision and local characteristics such as demography to steering group members who may contribute other information to a review
- ask steering group members to sign a data sharing protocol that governs use of information shared during the review and that ensures confidentiality and appropriate handling of commercial or sensitive information
- collect information about college estates using a consistent format and use only data provided by in-scope colleges
- use only published data in the final report of the review and is subject to quality assurance processes
- ask steering group members to check information that is subject to publication within a stated timescale.

## Information and guidance

[National information about the area review programme is published on gov.uk.](#)

We will:

- ensure that participants in a review know where to find the most recent publications and will indicate documents that have been updated including:
  - national guidance about the review programme
  - information about sixth-form college academy conversion
  - information about Transition Grants and Restructuring Facility
  - guidance for local enterprise partnerships, combined authorities and local authorities
  - due diligence framework.

## Feedback

Feedback is collected in diverse ways from review participants and others and is used to:

- improve processes
- improve inputs to the process
- inform ministers
- support national governance of the programme.

Feedback may be submitted at any time to [area.reviews@education.gov.uk](mailto:area.reviews@education.gov.uk)

Complaints may also be submitted to this email address.

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